

- Voluntary work/mutual aid would continue on a wide basis within society. Millions of people are involved in current voluntary sporting, social, community work within contemporary society. Why should this not continue?

- A national redistribution agency, receiving *voluntary* taxation from the economically active to fund essential services and also 'capital' projects. This could be accountable on a delegate basis to society as a whole. It would also enable richer regions and individuals to aid the economies of poorer regions.

- 'Ownership' and 'property' rights of land, houses, productive capacity to be based on occupancy and use.

Within such an economy there could be a wide variety of products, services, hours worked. Perhaps also differences in remuneration. After all, peoples wants, desires and needs do vary.

There are many other possible variations of Anarchist economic models. Human ingenuity and energy can, given the opportunity, overcome most problems.

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An Anarchist Perspective on Economics



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Imagining Possibilities

While anarchists have generally opposed the creation of 'blueprints', I believe we do not use our imaginative powers enough to sketch the possible ways our political, economic and social ideas might develop in practice. The syndicalist movement in 1930s Spain, and the individualist anarchists in 1890s America, were not so slow in coming forward with their interpretation of anarchist ideas.

An approach to anarchist economies involves the resolution of important questions.

Do we adopt central planning and 'communism' as the basis for exchange and distribution?

Should we retain the use of money for the purposes of reward, exchange and distribution?

What would an anarchist economy be like?

I do not propose to comment at length on the first of these questions, since I believe that despite the advent of 'computer networks', 'silicon chips', 'automation', etc., the exchanges and multitudinous transactions involved in modern society and its economy are far too complex for effective central control and co-ordination. The USSR did function for nearly seventy years with a centrally planned economy, but they were not happy years for its citizens. There was great suffering, famine, shortages, horrendous industrial accidents and extensive pollution to the detriment of both population and nature, all this in addition to the severe political repression in that society.

Contemporary Anarchists are not exclusively committed to 'Anarcho-communism' and the abolition of money. John Griffin's pamphlet, *A Structured Anarchism* (Published by Freedom Press, London), makes a good case for the retention of a currency in an anarchist society as a medium of exchange and distribution. The use of currency pre-dates both the state and capitalism, and is widely used and understood. There are many ways in which the use of money can be taken back into local, community level control, Local Exchange Trading Schemes, Credit Unions, etc. On the question of money, we should be seeking to redress its misuses, not to challenge its existence as such.

An Anarchist Economy

In response to the third question, one possible vision of an anarchist economy is a 'mixed' economy. This might comprise the following:

- * Worker collectives / co-operatives, with the members owning and operating these enterprises. These might take over and operate most large scale companies and organisations in the current productive and service sectors. The workforce would continue to receive 'wages' as payment, though 'wage-differentials' might be reduced or absent.
- * A significant self-employed sector, with millions as today, working for themselves providing a wide range of goods and services in their local communities.
- * The continued existence of a private sector.

If people wished to continue as wage labour for private contractors, nobody has the right to stop them.

- * Community banks / credit unions to make funds available to small private companies, collectives, co-operatives, the self-employed and community initiatives at low rates of interest. These to be either family or community owned, community controlled and run.
- * Community control of Pension Funds. This would help redirect production into socially useful products and services, and end the blind pursuit of the 'highest available return' mentality, which leads to investment in armaments, Pergau Dams, and pursues short term gain rather than rational long term interests. Pension Funds, back in the hands of the people who create them, could help finance the creation of the alternative economy.
- * A national network of 'Local Exchange Trading Schemes' to enable local and community based activity to expand and flourish.
- * A general redistribution of agricultural land to recreate small sized farming units. A recreation of an independent peasantry, no less.
- * Land usage determined on the basis of 'sustainability' with planning presumptions in favour of low impact, sustainable living and working projects.
- * The greening of Cities, Towns and Villages along the lines envisaged by the Permaculture movement.